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Social Policy Response Series

Dilfuza Kurolova
Sebastian Schiek

Uzbekistan's Social Policy Response to Covid-19: A Test for the Mirziyoyev Regime



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UZBEKISTAN'S SOCIAL POLICY RESPONSE TO COVID-19: A TEST FOR THE MIRZIYOYEV REGIME

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ABSTRACT

In 2016, after 25 years of international isolation, Uzbekistan started to open up and modernize its economy. In this phase, the Covid-19 pandemic hit the economy and society hard. The government reacted with a harsh lockdown. As an immediate crisis response, it allocated funds from international donors and the national budget to protect the economy and vulnerable groups. Due to a lack of data and public and scientific discourses, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of these measures. As in other countries, the pandemic revealed well-known structural and institutional problems, such as inequality, poverty and the informal labor sector as well as the vulnerability of labor migrants. The budget for the healthcare system was increased significantly in 2020 and again in 2021. It is not yet possible to predict whether the pandemic will lead to policy changes in the long term. In addition to restrictions on personal liberty in the wake of the lockdown and curfew, the government also enacted a law that criminalizes the dissemination of false information, which has been criticized by human rights experts. It is safe to say that the reforms and opening up of the country since 2016 have significantly improved the government's crisis response capabilities. However, problems with the continuation of top-down decision-making also became apparent.

INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan reported its first confirmed Covid-19 infection on 15 March 2020 (Gazeta.uz 2020c).¹ The infection rates reached a peak in mid-July and September. As of 29 October 2020, there were 66,313 confirmed cases and 560 deaths (WHO). Uzbek officials have denied allegations made by civil society organizations that they deliberately under-reported Covid-19 cases (Fergana.news 2020). However, scientists using data on excess mortality in Uzbekistan assume significantly higher death rates than those officially reported (Yusupov 2020).

Even before the first virus infection, the government imposed initial measures, such as travel restrictions. Immediately after the first infection appeared, the government imposed a restrictive lockdown. This included the closure of schools and kindergartens, shutting down public transportation and the closure of border-crossings. Even private rides and the use of bicycles were banned, and administrative and criminal charges for violating epidemiological rules were imposed. At the beginning of the pandemic, the government experimented with quarantine centers, which, however, turned out to be an accelerator of the virus spread. The sharp increase in the number of infections after an initial relaxation led to a renewed, less restrictive lockdown, and partial repatriation of Uzbek citizens, especially labor migrants (EADaily 2020).

In January 2021, due to low levels of new confirmed infections, the government decided to open up the economy and social life to the greatest possible extent. In addition to opening cafes and restaurants, even major

1 Uzbekistan has 33.5 million inhabitants (2019) with a population growth rate of 1.8%. Healthcare spending amounts to 5.3% of GDP (2018), see World Bank (2021).

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events can be held again (UzNews 2021). The government also started to shut down so called Covid-treatment centers (UzDaily 2021). In late January, the UK variant of Covid-19 was discovered in a traveler returning from abroad. According to official information, the infected person was successfully isolated (Gazeta.uz 2021).

All decisions to counter the spread of Covid-19 in Uzbekistan are made by the “Special State Commission”, which was set up in January 2020 and reports directly to the president. The main communication channel of the commission to media and society was the online messenger Telegram,² with more than one million subscribers by November 2020. The most important news source for the population is still (state-controlled) television (World Bank 2020).

The first of two lockdowns, which was particularly restrictive, and the continuing slump in economic growth had a strong impact on the economy: exports fell by 20% compared to the previous year. Energy exports fell by 68%. Remittances from migrant workers decreased from 11% to 6% of GDP (EBRD 2020). Specific economic sectors were under considerable pressure. The energy sector, which is undergoing an unfinished process of structural reform since 2017, faced a heavy decrease in the demand for energy and will be loss-making until 2022 according to estimations of the EBRD (Grimaldi 2020). The informal labor sector, which accounts for up to 50% of the labor market in Uzbekistan, and the tourism sector were particularly affected. These developments are assumed to have an impact on Uzbekistan’s poverty rate (UNDP 2020b).

The Covid-19 pandemic hit Uzbekistan in a phase of structural economic and social reforms, which President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is pushing forward since he took office in 2016. Mirziyoyev, who was previously prime minister, inherited a rusty economic and political system from his predecessor Islom Karimov, who died in 2016.

POLITICS AND SOCIAL POLICY IN THE KARIMOV ERA (1991–2016)

After gaining independence from the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan with Karimov as president embarked on a peculiar path. Unlike the other post-Soviet republics, the government did not embrace the idea of capitalist reforms and maintained centralized control of the economy, with state-owned, large-scale enterprises dominating key sectors of the economy (Ruziev, Ghosh & Dow 2007). It sought to achieve industrialization – which was one of two official state goals – through economic protectionism. Avoiding privatization and free markets, Uzbekistan was considered “IMF unfriendly” in the eyes of international and Western observers (Broome 2010). In some areas, the government’s economic policy approach turned out to be successful. For example, it was able to establish a national state-owned automobile industry. Key factors for this success were an international joint venture along with a combination of protectionist policies and free trade agreements with Russia and other post-Soviet countries (Tadjiev & Donzé 2020). Resistance to international pressure for economic reform was possible because Uzbekistan was able to use its energy resources (especially gas and oil) for its own consumption and, inheriting a cotton industry, owned an export industry that gave the regime relatively large fiscal capacity (Ruziev et al. 2007; Broome 2010).

The second official priority of the Karimov regime was social protection. However, Uzbekistan developed during this period in fact a highly repressive autocratic system. Key industries such as the cotton sector relied on forced labor. As the labor market could not create enough jobs for the rapidly growing population, many Uzbeks had to work abroad. Nevertheless, an Uzbek-type of middle class emerged in Karimov’s Uzbekistan that appreciated the progress, stability and new opportunities for consumption compared to their experiences in the Soviet Union and the insecure 1990s. The new Uzbek middle class formed an important basis for regime stability and the Uzbek-type of modernization (Trevisani 2014).

The Karimov regime also implemented various kinds of socio-political reforms. Uzbekistan had inherited its health system from the Soviet era, which was described as “comprehensive and sophisticated” but also one that neglected primary and community healthcare, lacked preventive medicine, was underfunded, with low wages, and widespread informal payments (Parfitt 2009:36). Uzbekistan started reforming the health sector in the second half of the 1990s. This included adopting a new legal framework for the health sector and a plan to develop primary healthcare (Parfitt 2009:38). Despite Karimov’s reform initiatives, the healthcare system remained shaped by the Soviet model and was considered highly fragmented due to the large number of actors who were not

2 The Channel can be accessed via <https://t.me/koronavirusinfouz> (in Russian).

well coordinated. The financing from local budgets also had the consequence that regional inequalities led to diverging quality of healthcare across regions and districts (Rechel et al. 2012).

Beyond structural changes, experts have concluded that Karimov's health reforms delivered only modest improvements in health outcomes. Barriers to reform have been identified at various levels: In addition to structural factors such as underfunding, incorrect financing incentives and inadequate medical infrastructure, authors identified the lack of diffusion of modern medical knowledge across Uzbekistan's health sector as the main problem (Rechel et al. 2011; Ahmedov et al. 2013). This was due to both a lack of access to English-language literature and a lack of political support for evidence-based medicine and the introduction of standardized quality evaluations (Ahmedov et al. 2013; Ahmedov et al. 2014).

One of the larger socio-political reforms was the social assistance reform. The government transferred the administration of social assistance to local communities. These local communities, so called *Mahallas*, are traditional, self-governing institutions, which were controlled by the authoritarian state. In contrast to the strong centralization of political power and control in Uzbekistan, this new social assistance scheme represented a "highly decentralized and flexible system of targeting" (Micklewright & Marnie 2005:444). However, the reform also included a shift away from the women- and mother-centered care of the Soviet system toward a focus on families and thus a move towards a more patriarchal system. Single and divorced women and mothers were disadvantaged (Kamp 2004).

Despite partial successes, such as the development of a car industry, the economic and social problems that Mirziyoyev inherited in 2016 were tremendous. In an era of modern capitalist authoritarianism, Uzbekistan had become a dinosaur and suffered from international isolation, outdated infrastructure, lack of foreign investment, high unemployment rates and poverty.

POLITICS AND SOCIAL POLICY IN THE MIRZIYOYEV ERA (SINCE 2016)

Since 2016, Uzbekistan has embarked on a process of economic and social modernization. The government is placing special emphasis on economic growth by opening the economy to foreign investors and developing its industries and trade, but also aiming to reform the educational and health sectors. As a result of the reforms, society is enjoying significantly more freedoms. The government is also promoting gender equality. Official political discourses are more forward-looking. The government has not yet fully delivered on its promises of strengthening parliament's power and conducting competitive and fair elections. Political power is strongly concentrated in the executive branch as it used to be. Decision-making is implemented primarily through presidential orders and government decrees. Parliament plays only a minor role, a fact that is even admitted by the president (Mirziyoyev 2020).

In spite of Doing Business Index's sharp improvement within the last few years (Doing Business 2020), corruption is widespread, especially in privatization processes, and casts doubt on the extent to which the announced separation between politics and business will be successful (Schiek 2017, 2018; Lasslett 2019; Lemon 2019). Social policy is an important part of Uzbekistan's development strategy. The government is striving to significantly reduce poverty and income inequality, especially by pursuing an active labor market policy. Another priority is improving social security. This includes basic security and reforms of the health sector. Amongst the goals are reforming the emergency medical services, improving medical and social-medical care, and investing in preventive healthcare and medical infrastructure (President of Uzbekistan 2017).

Visible changes in Uzbekistan's new social policy are evident in the state's treatment of migrant workers. Migrant workers and their remittances were already an important factor for the national economy during the Karimov era, but they did not receive welfare assistance, political support, and social recognition. Mirziyoyev has not only publicly acknowledged the contribution of Uzbek labor migrants for the first time. Uzbekistan is now also pursuing a proactive migration policy, has established service centers in Russia to assist migrants, and is providing language training to diversify the range of destination countries and to decrease reliance on the Russian labor market. Another example is the central government's effort to end the system of forced labor that has developed over many years. Human rights groups have noted significant improvements in 2020 (Uzbek Forum 2021).

UZBEKISTAN'S SOCIAL POLICY RESPONSE TO COVID-19

From the beginning of the pandemic until the end of September 2020, the government passed 81 laws, ordinances and implementing regulations that made an explicit reference to Corona/Covid-19 in the legal text. However, many of these laws may already have been in the pipeline independently of Covid-19. Thirty of these laws mentioned Corona explicitly in the title. Twelve of these alone concerned the health sector, four each concerned pandemic control and support for society and entrepreneurs. The government worked closely with international organizations that praised the government's actions as consistent with international best practices (UNDP 2020a). As a legacy of the past, Uzbekistan lacks reliable data and is seen to struggle with administrative capacities to implement decisions. In addition to the lack of data, there is little experience in dealing with pandemics, which made it difficult to collect and process data during the Covid-19 crisis (Yusupov 2020).

One of the first measures to counter Covid-19 was the establishment of an anti-crisis fund, which, according to official sources, was endowed with funds of about USD 1 billion. The funds came from the state budget and from international donor organizations. To generate additional financial resources, the government also set up a foundation *Savohat va Kumak* ("Generosity and Support"), with which it solicited private donations, which, among others, came from well-known oligarchs (Tulyakov 2020). The foundation is under the control of President Mirziyoyev (Gazeta.uz 2020d).

Public Finance

According to official information, the anti-crisis fund was used to support the financial sector, private companies and needy individuals, and to make extensions of payment possible. The laws increased social assistance payments and provided certain occupational groups, e.g. in the health sector, with additional risk payments (World Bank 2020).

To support the economy, stimulate the labor market, and ensure business and household cash flow, the government adopted tax payment deferrals, tax waivers and reductions in individual income tax, social and other taxes in different sectors. Tax exemptions for entrepreneurs were approved, as well as relief for tax declarations and extensions of deadlines for contributions and loan repayments. Various basic foodstuffs were exempted from tax (OECD 2020).

Special support was also given to the tourism sector, which has become especially important in Uzbekistan over last two years and was particularly affected by the crisis. Measures included the reduction of corporate income tax rates for the tourism sector, and tax waivers for private museums and art galleries.

In the summer of 2020, needy families received one-time payments disbursed through the *Mahalla*-based social assistance system introduced during the Karimov era (see above). According to official data, UZS 380 billion (approx. USD 36 million) was paid to 400,000 families. In addition, UZS 200 billion (approx. USD 19 million) was disbursed by presidential decree to other families through the *Savohat va Kumak* foundation. For these one-time payments, needy families were registered in a special book called *temir daftar*. The *mahallas* disbursed the payments to the "head of the family" (Gazeta.uz 2020d).

Labor Market

Various legal acts addressed the socio-economic peculiarities and specifics of the Uzbek labor market. These special features include the vast informal sector, poverty, and the importance of external labor migration.

According to official figures, two million workers have jobs abroad, mainly in Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkey. However, the actual number of migrant workers is estimated to be significantly higher. It is also estimated that 200,000 new migrant workers are added each year because the Uzbek labor market cannot absorb them. In the course of the Covid-19 crisis, more than 200,000 labor migrants had to return to Uzbekistan (Khaidaraliev 2020) and remained without income due to the sharp increase in the unemployment rate (15%). The decline in foreign remittances has also become a problem for the economy because they make up a significant part of the GDP. Remittances decreased by USD 300 million (out of a total of approx. USD 3 billion) in the first half of 2020 compared to the previous year (Central Bank of Uzbekistan 2020). In August, the government announced that it would initially support migrants with a loan equivalent to USD 1,000 (Eurasianet 2020).

The government also had to deal with the high proportion of jobs in the informal sector, which is over 50 %, and which has been particularly hard hit by the crisis. In addition, the pandemic is likely to have a negative impact on the poverty rate, jeopardizing the government's efforts to reduce it. UNDP estimates that more than half a million people in Uzbekistan have fallen into poverty because of the Covid-19 crisis. Uzbekistan's poverty rate is likely to rise to over 10% (UNDP 2020b). One of the government's responses was to promote self-employment. To this end, it has expanded the list of activities for which self-employment is permitted and the self-employed can receive benefits. It has increased existing programs such as "Every Family – One Entrepreneur" in May and July with credits amounting to almost USD 200 million (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan 2020a). In addition, the government passed several legal acts that provide for the development of arable land or the allocation of arable land to families. According to official figures, 200,000 hectares of land are to be developed, part of which is to be distributed to needy families so that they can earn an income (Tulyakov 2020). The extent to which these measures, such as the expansion of opportunities for self-employment, will really help still needs to be examined. In theory, the land allocation can increase food security for disadvantaged families. However, it is unclear if significant income can be generated from this unless additional knowledge and basic tools are provided that are necessary to achieve sufficient productivity. The strategy also contradicts the recommendations of experts, who emphasize that too many people already work in the agricultural sector in Uzbekistan and that it would be more important for the country's economic development to create jobs outside the agricultural sector (Petrick & Djanibekov 2019).

Healthcare System

According to official figures, the government spent UZS 14.8 trillion (approx. USD 1.40 billion) for the health sector in 2020 and plans to allocate UZS 19.6 trillion (approx. USD 1.85 billion) in 2021 (UzDaily 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic hit the Uzbek healthcare system in a phase of reform, which Mirziyoyev announced in 2016. A law passed in 2018 triggered extensive changes,³ to which experts attributed both positive and negative effects.⁴ The goal of the law was to overcome structural weaknesses of the post-Soviet healthcare system by focusing on primary healthcare. However, during the reform, many paramedical wards were closed, and small hospitals were abandoned in favor of larger units. Primary healthcare in rural areas is provided by a graduated system consisting of rural hospitals, doctors' practices, and paramedical wards (*feldshersko-akusherskij punkt*). This system enabled the nearest medical care for the rural population to be within an average radius of 3 km. The post-2016 changes could lead to a shortage of medical staff in rural areas and considerably increase the maximum distance to the nearest medical care station up to 25 km. This is a problem because public transport and infrastructure is poorly developed in some areas and not all families in rural areas have access to cars. Data from 2014 indicate that only a quarter of all households have a car or a comparable means of transport (ADB 2014). During the post-2016 reform, privatization, and the introduction of competitive elements in the health sector were debated as well. In other countries, downsizing, excessive privatization, or strong competition in the healthcare system came under increasing criticism in the wake of the Covid-19 crisis.

At the end of 2020, President Mirziyoyev referred to learning from the pandemic, when he outlined the government's plan to reform the health sector in the years ahead. The government will put an emphasis on developing primary care, especially the development of family doctors. For these doctors, the government plans to create more than 300 new family doctor stations and 85 family polyclinics. Healthcare professionals in rural areas are supposed to receive extra support (UzDaily 2020). The government will also start a pilot project with primary healthcare brigades in the Syrdarya region. These brigades consist of five different specialists, including a family doctor, paramedical workers assisting the doctor in the areas of therapy and pediatrics, as well as visiting nurses and obstetricians (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan 2020c; UzDaily 2020).

A second goal, announced at the end of 2020, is the focus on preventive healthcare. According to an official at the Ministry of Health, the pandemic has revealed the problem of chronic illnesses among the population. The

3 President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (07.12.2018): Decree No. PP-5590 of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "About complex measures on radical improvement of healthcare system of the Republic of Uzbekistan" (in Russian), viewed 27 October 2020, from <https://www.lex.uz/docs/4096199>.

4 The following information is based on an interview with an international expert, November 2020.

government is planning to promote sport and to start a program to promote cycling and walking by creating urban bicycle paths (UzDaily 2020). Promoting health prevention is also an important part of a state program adopted at the end of 2020, entitled with “Year of Youth Support and Health Promotion” (President of the Republic of Uzbekistan 2020b).⁵

PITFALLS OF TOP-DOWN POLICYMAKING

The government’s responses during the Covid-19 pandemic have highlighted the structural problems of formulating and implementing social policy. For example, the establishment of quarantine centers for infected persons was reasonable, as many infected people did not have the opportunity to distance themselves spatially from relatives and other persons. However, it was poorly implemented, because both positively tested and suspected cases were accommodated and quarantined there. The quarantine centers thus developed into accelerators of the pandemic; therefore, special medical distribution centers were created to identify whether a patient needs emergency care and quarantine centers were transformed into specialized hospitals for Covid-19-positive patients in need of serious medical and emergency care (UZ news 2020; Pannier 2020).

The establishment of state coordination centers for volunteer assistance demonstrates both the existing capacities of state control and the problems of centralization. With the establishment of the coordination centers, society-organized welfare assistance for the needy was prohibited. The reasons given for this step were infection control and distribution problems. Moreover, private initiatives reached only a portion of those affected. Until then, numerous organizations and initiatives had taken care of the sick, disabled and poor, using civil society networks, social media and messenger services. As a result of the governmental intervention, volunteers were no longer supposed to work for their independent initiative but for the government centers. According to media reports, the government succeeded in getting the centers up and running and recruiting volunteers to work there. However, the state centers themselves initially had problems meeting the high demand (Gazeta.uz 2020a).

Despite these limitations, the government also repeatedly succeeded in reversing political decisions or improving implementation. This became evident in the decision to pay out pensioners’ benefits without cash. Although sufficient bank cards were issued, seamless implementation failed. However, not enough ATMs were available, and the fees were a significant burden for pensioners. The government then revised the new rule of cashless payments (Gazeta.uz 2020b). Employees of the pension fund started to deliver the money directly to the pensioners at home. Finally, accusations of corruption arose in the course of reforms and measures. According to the General Prosecutor’s Office, investigations have been initiated against leading regional politicians for the embezzlement of funds from the *Savohat va Kumak* fund (Kun.uz 2020).

CONCLUSION

Since 2016, President Mirziyoyev has dismantled the totalitarian police state of his predecessor. His reform however did not result in democratization or fully unrestricted rights to freedom. Foreign and domestic observers were therefore concerned that the Covid-19 crisis could lead to a rollback of the freedoms gradually already granted (Laruelle et al. 2021:5–7). Indeed, a new law adopted at the beginning of the first lockdown that criminalizes the dissemination of false information also threatens journalistic freedom and was considered too vague, enabling its wide usage. This law has been criticized by national and international human rights organizations and severely restricted public debate on corona measures (ICNL 2020). In February 2021, a blogger was arrested, who had gained popularity for his reports on everyday problems. In connection with the arrest, an official of the Ministry of the Interior referred to the new law that criminalizes the dissemination of false information: “We remind citizens that there is an article in the criminal and administrative code envisioned for spreading false information” (Eurasianet 2021 a).

After economic growth fell to 0.5% in 2020, development banks such as the ADB are forecasting growth of 6.5%, if conditions are favorable (ADB 2020). Economic revival, the implementation of further reforms, and the resolution of structural problems that became apparent during the crisis are likely to be crucial to prevent the

5 For the biopolitical dimension of the Covid-19 crisis, see Laruelle et al. (2021:10–11).

mood among the population from deteriorating further. Dissatisfaction was evident, for example, in the wake of protests against unreliable gas supplies in the winter of 2020 (Pannier 2021). The volatile mood and uncertainty about developments in 2021 are also likely to be the motivation behind the government's decision to bring forward the presidential elections due this year from December to the much warmer month of October (Eurasianet 2021b).

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APPENDIX 1: SOCIAL POLICY DEVELOPMENTS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 BY POLICY AREA
(UZBEKISTAN, JANUARY–SEPTEMBER 2020)

	Policy Area	Pensions	Healthcare	Long-term care and disability	Labor market	Education
(1)	Have there been any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
(2)	If (1) yes, have any of these reforms been explicit responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?	Yes	Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes
(3)	If (2) yes, has there been significant regional variation in the implementation of these reforms?	No	No	N/A	No	No
(4)	Have subnational governments enacted any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Policy Area	Family benefits	Housing	Social assistance	Other*	
(1)	Have there been any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
(2)	If (1) yes, have any of these reforms been explicit responses to the Covid-19 pandemic?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
(3)	If (2) yes, has there been significant regional variation in the implementation of these reforms?	No	Yes	No	No	
(4)	Have subnational governments enacted any significant legislative reforms in the indicated policy area during the indicated time period?	No	Yes	No	Yes	

* Legislative reforms in other policy areas explicitly aimed at social protection, e.g. food subsidies or tax cuts aimed at social protection.

APPENDIX 2: SOCIAL POLICY LEGISLATION IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 (UZBEKISTAN, JANUARY–SEPTEMBER 2020)

Note: This appendix covers all major national social policy legislation published between 1 January 2020 and 30 September 2020.

Law 1		
(1)	Number of law	P-5537
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Распоряжение Президента «Об образовании Специальной республиканской комиссии по подготовке Программы мер по предупреждению завоза и распространения нового типа коронавируса в Республике Узбекистан»
(3)	Name of law (English)	On formation of a Special Republican Commission on preparation of the Program of measures for prevention of import and spread of new type of coronavirus in the Republic of Uzbekistan
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	Not Applicable
(5)	Date of law's enactment	29 January 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	29 January 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	Not Applicable
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The law creates the Special Republican Commission which coordinates government policy and legislation in the context of the Covid-19 crisis.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable
Law 1: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Other (Legislative reforms in other policy areas explicitly aimed at social protection (e.g. food subsidies or tax cuts aimed at social protection))
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The law creates the Commission which coordinates government policy and legislation in the context of the Covid-19 crisis. It was the initial document to stop the spread of Covid-19 in Uzbekistan and set rules for coordinating further state policies on pandemic spread.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The law provides only a general framework and legitimization for the government's further actions in countering Covid-19 spread.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Not Applicable
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Since there were no registered cases of Covid-19 in Uzbekistan, the law doesn't include any benefits to the population nor businesses.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Since there were no registered cases of Covid-19 in Uzbekistan, the law doesn't include any new benefits to the population nor businesses.

Law 1: Component 1		
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	No changes in social benefit provision.
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UZS 860
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The law doesn't include such information.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 2		
(1)	Number of law	UP-5969
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Указ Президента «О ПЕРВООЧЕРЕДНЫХ МЕРАХ ПО СМЯГЧЕНИЮ НЕГАТИВНОГО ВОЗДЕЙСТВИЯ НА ОТРАСЛИ ЭКОНОМИКИ КОРОНАВИРУСНОЙ ПАНДЕМИИ И ГЛОБАЛЬНЫХ КРИЗИСНЫХ ЯВЛЕНИЙ»
(3)	Name of law (English)	Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan On priority measures to mitigate the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic and global crisis phenomena on the economy
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	Not Applicable
(5)	Date of law's enactment	19 March 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	19 March 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	Yes
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The decree creates a special Anti-crisis Fund to cover expenses connected to treating Covid-19, supporting businesses and keeping the economy running in the country.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	Yes
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	3

Law 2: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Social assistance
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The decree creates a special Anti-crisis Fund to cover expenses connected to treating Covid-19, supporting businesses and keeping the economy running in the country.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable

Law 2: Component 1		
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The document mainly provides special conditions and benefits to businesses. Moreover, it provides special benefits to healthcare workers involved in treating Covid-19 cases.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The document invokes a waiver for some taxes on businesses for the period of the Covid-19 pandemic.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Indefinite
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Additional benefits are provided to healthcare workers and to help businesses keep their activities going without creating additional financial burdens.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Yes
(28)	Note on (27)	Cut from specific taxes to help businesses
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	UZS 10 billion
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UZS 860
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The law allows funds to flow from financial institutions and is not just limited to the state budget.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 2: Component 2		
(13)	Policy Area	Family benefits
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The decree creates a special Anti-crisis Fund for families in need, including expansion of social benefits.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The document allows allocation of additional funds to support families in need.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The document doesn't clearly say which benefits and when, and to what extent.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Indefinite
(25)	<i>If fix-term, duration in months</i>	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Additional benefits are provided to families in need, but the law doesn't specify which benefits and to what extent.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UZS 860
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law

Law 2: Component 2		
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The law allows funds to flow from financial institutions and is not just limited to the state budget.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	partially

Law 2: Component 3		
(13)	Policy Area	Labor market
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The decree creates a special Anti-crisis Fund to assist labor migrants in learning new skills and languages needed for further employment.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Not Applicable
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The document states the importance of supporting migrant workers in acquiring new skills, learning new languages and finding a job to prevent mass unemployment.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Not Applicable
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The document intends to support the current state of migrants' employment.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Not Applicable
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	Not Applicable
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	Not Applicable
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Law
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The law allows funds to flow from financial institutions and is not just limited to the state budget.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	hardly at all

Law 3		
(1)	Number of law	UP-6029
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Указ Президента Республики Узбекистан «О дополнительных мерах поддержки населения, субъектов предпринимательства, сферы общественного питания, торговли и услуг для снижения негативного воздействия коронавирусной пандемии»
(3)	Name of law (English)	Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan On additional measures to support population, business entities, catering, trade and services to reduce the negative impact of the coronavirus pandemic
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	Not Applicable
(5)	Date of law's enactment	20 July 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	20 July 2020

Law 3		
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	Yes
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	Regulation of public food/café sector in Uzbekistan, including temporary tax waiver.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 3: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Other (Legislative reforms in other policy areas explicitly aimed at social protection (e.g. food subsidies or tax cuts aimed at social protection))
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The law continues further state assistance to small businesses, working in food distribution and food services.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	Yes
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Until 31 December 2020
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The law mainly focuses on tax waivers and sets special regulations for public food places not to spread Covid-19 virus.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Fix-term
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Until December 31, 2020
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The law notes that further regulation of this sector will be adopted by the end of 2020 considering global best practices.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	The law focuses only on tax regulation and assistance to businesses during the Covid-19 pandemic.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	Yes
(28)	Note on (27)	Cuts specific taxes to help businesses
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UZS 860
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The document helps small businesses that suffered from lockdowns and other restrictions.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 4		
(1)	Number of law	461
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Вазирлар Махкамасининг «Коронавирус инфекциясини юқтирган беморларга тиббий ёрдам кўрсатиш самарадорлигини ошириш чора-тадбирлари тўғрисида» Қарори
(3)	Name of law (English)	Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers "On measures to increase the efficiency of medical care for patients infected by Coronavirus infection"
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	Not Applicable
(5)	Date of law's enactment	04 August 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	04 August 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	Yes
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The law creates special medical hospitals to treat patients with Covid-19, transformation of at least one hospital in a region into a special hospital for Covid-19 positive patients, and medical distribution centers.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 4: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Healthcare
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The law creates special Covid-19 centers to centrally treat patients.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	Centers are active for as long as the risk of Covid-19 spread exists in Uzbekistan
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Indefinite
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	Healthcare workers receive salaries for working at Covid-19 centers that are almost 10 times higher than other state hospitals.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	Yes
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Indefinite
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	Healthcare workers at special Covid-19 centers receive additional raised salary and benefits to motivate them and compensate for additional risks.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	No cuts are prescribed
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UZS 860
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	The funds for these activities are taken from the state budget.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	to a large degree

Law 5		
(1)	Number of law	458
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Вазирлар Махкамасининг «Коронавирус инфекцияси тарқалишига қарши кураш, аҳолининг санитария-эпидемиологик осойишталиги ва саломатлигини сақлашга жалб қилинган тез тиббий ёрдам ходимларини қўшимча моддий рағбатлантириш тўғрисида» Қарори
(3)	Name of law (English)	Decision of the Cabinet of Ministers "On additional financial stimulation of emergency healthcare workers involved to fight against coronavirus spread, to maintain sanitary and epidemiological well-being and health of the population"
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	Not Applicable
(5)	Date of law's enactment	30 July 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	30 July 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	Yes
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Not Applicable
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The law established categories of healthcare workers who are eligible for an additional financial stimulus for the risk in fighting against Corona and treating patients with Covid-19.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 5: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Healthcare
(14)	Brief description of reform component	Expansion of healthcare workers at family polyclinics and providing additional benefits to assist the population in overcoming the Covid-19 virus.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Expansion
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	It is indefinite
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Indefinite
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	There are three categories of healthcare workers at family polyclinics that are eligible for such benefits.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Indefinite
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	This benefit is a special measure that is indefinite but limited to Covid-19 risks.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	No cuts are prescribed
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	UZS 100 billion
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UZS 860
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	These funds were provided by A. Usmanov, Maecenas to Uzbekistan

Law 5: Component 1		
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	partially

Law 6		
(1)	Number of law	UP-6035
(2)	Name of law (original language)	Указ Президента Республики Узбекистан „О мерах по смягчению коронавирусной пандемии, кардинальному совершенствованию системы санитарно-эпидемиологического благополучия и охраны здоровья населения“
(3)	Name of law (English)	Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures to mitigate the coronavirus pandemic, to radically improve the system of sanitary-epidemiological well-being and health protection of the population"
(4)	Date of first parliamentary motion	Not Applicable
(5)	Date of law's enactment	25 July 2020
(6)	Date of law's publication	25 July 2020
(7)	Is the Covid-19 pandemic explicitly mentioned as a motivation in the law or any accompanying text?	Yes
(8)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for the initial parliamentary motion for this law?	Yes
(9)	Was the Covid-19 pandemic a motivation for a significant revision of the legislative project after the initial parliamentary motion?	Yes
(10)	Note on (7)-(9)	The law creates special mobile healthcare groups at each family polyclinic to cure families from different diseases, including Covid-19 at early stages. Also to develop labs on the ground.
(11)	Was this law a legislative package that contained multiple social reform components?	No
(12)	If (11) yes, how many distinct social reform components did it contain?	Not Applicable

Law 6: Component 1		
(13)	Policy Area	Healthcare
(14)	Brief description of reform component	The law sets rules for working with the population and enables additional opportunities to promote healthy lifestyles.
(15)	Change in coverage of existing benefits?	Maintenance
(16)	Duration of coverage change?	No
(17)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(18)	Note on (15)-(17)	The law doesn't include a timeframe, but considers that mobile groups will remain active in future reacting to population requests.
(19)	Change in generosity of existing benefits?	Expansion
(20)	Duration of generosity change?	Indefinite
(21)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(22)	Note on (19)-(21)	The law creates special jobs for promoting healthy lifestyles, considering capacity building and re-training activities.
(23)	Introduction of new benefits?	No
(24)	Duration of new benefits?	Not Applicable

Law 6: Component 1		
(25)	If fix-term, duration in months	Not Applicable
(26)	Note on (23)-(25)	No new benefits are provided.
(27)	Cuts of existing benefits?	No
(28)	Note on (27)	The law expands family polyclinic activities on the ground and does not make any cuts
(29)	Estimated cost of reform in 2020 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(30)	Estimated cost of reform in 2021 (national currency)	Not Applicable
(31)	National Currency Code (ISO 4217)	UZS 860
(32)	Source of cost estimation	Other
(33)	Note (29)-(31)	Funds will be provided by the state budget according to general healthcare policy and financing family polyclinics.
(34)	If the implementation of the reform should already have started, has the reform been implemented?	partially